

Sen. Carper, Gov. Carney, Conservation Groups Hail Christina River Project and Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund

*The Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge in Wilmington
/DNREC photo*

U.S. Senator Tom Carper and Delaware Governor John Carney joined conservation partners at the Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge in Wilmington today to celebrate the Christiana and Brandywine River restoration and resiliency project funded by the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund. They celebrated another important step in the ongoing work to improve Wilmington's riverfront area with clean, healthy rivers and attractive places for people and wildlife.

"I am pleased to be here today with so many good partners to support the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund's investments in the protection and preservation of this ecological treasure," said U.S. Senator Tom Carper, Chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. "Projects like this are critical for our efforts to tackle climate change and help ensure that all Delawareans can enjoy these precious resources for generations to come."

For the future of federal infrastructure investments, the U.S. Senate recently approved the bipartisan infrastructure package. The bill includes \$26 million of supplemental funding for the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program (DRBRP) administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over five years. The funding supports on-the-ground restoration projects

and new and existing jobs across the four-state watershed through the DRBRP. Projects will enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality to support wildlife and drinking water for people, enhance water management for flood damage mitigation, and improve recreational opportunities for public access. Amidst the growing threats of sea level rise, a creeping salt line, frequent flooding, habitat loss, and polluted stormwater runoff, this investment is desperately needed.

“Millions of people in our region depend on the Delaware River Basin for clean drinking water, and the river remains vitally important for outdoor recreation and economic development for communities in Delaware and beyond,” said Governor John Carney. “All Delawareans deserve clean water. That’s why we’ve made it a priority to upgrade our infrastructure to make sure all Delaware families have access to clean drinking water. We will continue to work with local and federal partners and states in our region that rely on the Delaware River Watershed to properly manage this valuable resource.”

“DNREC has been working for years through the Christina-Brandywine River Remediation, Restoration, Resilience project – or CBR4 – toward a time when the Christina River and Brandywine Creek are once again drinkable, swimmable and fishable,” said [Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control](#) (DNREC) Secretary Shawn M. Garvin. “We believe it is an achievable goal and are building on decades of work to create a holistic, inspiring vision and plan to direct remediation, restoration and resilience actions for the next 10 to 20 years.”

“The Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund has been invaluable to Delaware, and the watershed as a whole by investing in projects that improve drinking water quality, provide public access to outdoor recreation, and restore and conserve natural habitats, ” said Jen Adkins, Director of Clean Water Supply at American Rivers and a member of the Christina Conservancy

Board of Directors. “To date, the Fund has supported 21 projects benefiting the First State, totaling \$4.3 million with natural and economic benefits. We’re excited for our project on the lower Christina and Brandywine Rivers here in Wilmington to be among them.”

American Rivers collaborated with the Christina Conservancy to receive a Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund award to work closely with DNREC and other local partners on a Christina and Brandywine Rivers Remediation, Restoration and Resilience plan. This plan will create a blueprint with specific restoration projects for completing the transformation of the lower Christina and Brandywine Rivers in Wilmington into healthy river ecosystems. Additional partners on the project include Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Sarver Ecological, BrightFields, Inc, and Anchor QEA, who are providing scientific and technical expertise, as well as the Delaware Nature Society who is working with local groups like the South Wilmington Planning Network and Collaborate Northeast to seek input from local residents.

Green jobs and workforce development are a focus of Delaware Nature Society whose [Trail Ambassadors](#) offered Senator Carper and Governor Carney a tour of the Boardwalk Marsh. Programs such as the Trail Ambassadors not only connect youth closer to the environment but serve as a steppingstone to the proposed Civilian Climate Corps.

“President Biden’s Civilian Climate Corps will put thousands of young people from all backgrounds to work making our communities more resilient, protecting our clean water, addressing environmental injustices, and restoring wildlife habitat – through essential projects like those supported through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund,” said Collin O’Mara, President and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. “A 21st century version of the Civilian Conservation Corps will accomplish these critical conservation goals, while equitably empowering the next generation of conservation

leaders to strengthen communities across America by restoring treasured natural resources.”

Joanne McGeoch, Delaware Nature Society Interim Executive Director said: “We are grateful to the many partners involved in raising awareness and protection of the Delaware River Watershed. This vital resource provides clean water for millions of people in the region, supports green jobs and our local economy. Delaware Nature Society believes that investments in our youth are equally vital to ensuring our future. To that end, we’ve launched the Trail Ambassador program, engaging local youth from Wilmington in training the next generation of conservation leaders. Along with our partners at National Wildlife Federation, we support the Biden administration’s proposal for the Civilian Conservation Corps and look forward to working together to ensure that conservation jobs are part of the recovery efforts needed to protect our environment, tackle climate change, and boost our economy.”

The Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund was launched in 2018 to conserve and restore natural areas, corridors and waterways on public and private lands that support native fish, wildlife and plants, and to contribute to the vitality of the communities in the Delaware River Watershed. The fund is facilitated by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and funding is provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program.

In total, 90 projects have been funded in the last three years that will improve 6,783 acres of forest habitat, treat polluted runoff using agricultural conservation practices on more than 4,596 acres, restore 141 acres of wetland habitat, and improve 3.5 miles of instream habitat in critical headwaters in the Delaware River Basin. View the full 2020 grant slate online at <http://bit.ly/dwcf2020>.

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